



A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

February 22, 2002

Asa Hutchinson, Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
2401 Jefferson Davis Highway
Suite 12060 - West Bldg.
Alexandria, Virginia 22301

Dear Administrator Hutchinson:

On behalf of the Cancer Leadership Council, we want to thank you for your thorough and thoughtful response to our concerns about potential regulatory excesses in connection with federal oversight of certain pain medications. (See your November 7 letter responding to September 19 correspondence with Congress.) Your comments were balanced and reassuring to advocates for aggressive control of cancer pain.

Recently, the Congress has completed the Appropriations process for the Department of Justice, including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), indicating that it expects a targeted approach to potential abuse of OxyContin in rural areas, particularly in certain areas of the southern United States. While we have no objection to rigorous enforcement against abuse of this and other drugs designed to address pain, we also believe it is important to sustain the balanced approach reflected in your November 7 letter. Many of the areas that are most affected by OxyContin abuse are also medically underserved and thus likely to have fewer resources specifically dedicated to pain management, including cancer pain.

We urge you, in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation that resulted in the October 23rd Joint Statement, to seek the input of representatives from the health professional and patient advocacy communities as you formulate strategies to address illegal use and abuse of pain medications such as OxyContin. Creating further dialogue with the medical and patient communities would help to ease the fears of medical professionals that they will be improperly targeted by the DEA for appropriate use of pain medications. The dialogue would also help ensure that enforcement strategies will not present barriers to patients who need to access pain medications. We appreciate your inclusion of a voluntary health organization in the recent Practitioner's Workgroup and would encourage you to broaden participation in the future.

Asa Hutchinson
February 22, 2002
Page 2

We hope that, as you carry out your mandate to address abuse of OxyContin in rural locations, you will also continue to recognize the legitimate role of such medications in the treatment of pain caused by cancer and other serious and life-threatening diseases. To the extent that your Administration takes steps to discourage inappropriate use of these drugs, we would hope you would also support public and professional education regarding the valid and appropriate uses of the products in the relief of otherwise intractable pain.

Thank you again for your informed interest and involvement in these issues of paramount importance to people with cancer and their caregivers and families.

Cancer Leadership Council

Alliance for Lung Cancer Advocacy, Support, and Education
American Cancer Society
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology & Oncology, Inc.
Cancer Care, Inc.
Cancer Research Foundation of America
The Children's Cause, Inc.
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups
International Myeloma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lymphoma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Oncology Nursing Society
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
US TOO! International, Inc.
The Wellness Community
Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

Enclosures